

Qualitative Research in Education

UNIT 3:

DEVELOPMENT AND APPLICATION

TOPIC 6:

ACTION RESEARCH

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Qualitative Research

Subtopics:

Subtopic 1: Purpose and characteristics

Subtopic 2: Benefits

Subtopic 3: Models

Qualitative Research

Learning outcomes:

Define action research and describe its origins and main benefits.



Qualitative Research

Warm-up activity:

Go to the link provided and provide your contribution

- C1 <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1mreg5p4Jellze8L2jkLHRufME30L8BmzdSIKKOwyajM/edit?usp=sharing>
- C2 https://docs.google.com/document/d/1yLcQCbnfd2-ZRmT2uB6WrqDvRXHj_R23cX4c6p5QETY/edit?usp=sharing

Subtopic 1

Purpose and characteristics

- + Studies that focus on **solving specific problems** that local practitioners face in their school and communities
- + It is a **combination** of research and action
- + It generates **local knowledge**, and it often results in changes and practices
- + It is used to **try out new strategies** and practices, and the researcher carefully measures and observes the **outcomes and consequences** of these actions



Teachers,
how do you use
action research?

Subtopic 1

Purpose and characteristics

Action research attitude

- + When you take on the attitude of a practitioner and a researcher and you think about how you can improve your workplace, try new strategies, and determine the consequences
- + The idea is for you to identify problems you face and act in ways that can help “fix” those problems and observe whether your “fix” has worked.
- + If you become an action researcher, you can continually develop theories (your understandings, explanations, predictions), test your theory, and integrate your theory with practice.
- + Action research starts with you and your place of work, and it is used to address what you believe is important to address.



Subtopic 1

Purpose and characteristics

Origin of Action Research

- + There is no perfect starting point for the origin or founding of action research
- + Historians consider [Kurt Lewin](#) (1890–1947) to be the founder.
- + Lewin first coined the term action research and he practiced applied social research during the 1930s and 1940s
- + He was also a great social psychologist considered the father of academic social psychology in the United States
- + Lewin tried to [link theory with practice](#), and he spent his career attempting to solve social problems



“If you want truly to understand something, try to change it”
- Kurt Lewin

Purpose and characteristics

- + In basic or regular scientific research, the primary goal is to produce knowledge.
- + Application of the knowledge is important, but the primary purpose is to produce scientific knowledge
- + Another goal of regular educational research is to find principles that work broadly, that generalize, that can be used in multiple places

+ In contrast, action research has in common with qualitative research a focus on the **local and the particular**, rather than on the national and the general.



Subtopic 2

Benefits

Strengths of A.R

- + Can be conducted by local practitioners
- + Produce lifelong learners
- + Integrate theory and practice
- + Is committed to democratic social change
- + Empowers practitioners to contribute to knowledge
- + Describe the complexities of local situations
- + Improves practice at the local level



Subtopic 2

Benefits

Weaknesses of A.R

- + Often involves a **small-scale study** that produces a limited and delimited amount of information and knowledge
- + Produces small-scale results that are **difficult to generalize** to different and larger context
- + Has **less scientific objectivity** compared to regular education science
- + Is often based on **weaker research designs**, compared to regular education science
- + Does not lend itself to making strong statements of cause and effect
- + Lacks **rigor** in terms of traditional measurement and **research validity**



Subtopic 3

Models

Participatory Action Research

■ **Participatory action research** Studies in which team members jointly frame and conduct research, producing knowledge about a shared problem

- + Emphasizes that multiple parties or **stakeholders** with an interest in the research topic and project must **work together** as a research team
- + You would be **just one member** in such a team and would have to relinquish some power
- + PAR is conducted by teachers, administrators, counselors, coaches, and other professionals to solve very specific problems.



Eg: a principal studying teacher burnout and dissatisfaction in a local school context, a group of teachers studying classroom discipline problems

Subtopic 3

Models

Critical Action Research

- **Critical action research** Openly transparent form of ideology-driven research designed to emancipate and reduce oppression of disadvantaged groups in society

- + CAR is similar to participatory action research, and the terms are sometimes used interchangeably.
- + CAR places more emphasis on the political possibilities of action research and emphasizes the empowerment of those with the little power in their communities and society
- + In education, one "father" of this kind of action research is Paulo Freire, who wrote the famous book titled Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1968/1970)
- + The key point is that CAR studies focus on reduction of inequality of income and wealth and/or reduction of some form of discrimination (gender, race, ethnicity, disability).



Subtopic 3

Models

Critical Action Research

An example of CAR is a study by Lindsay Mack (2012) titled “Does Every Student Have a Voice? Critical Action Research on Equitable Classroom Participation Practices.” The study was conducted in a multicultural ESL (English as a second language) classroom, and one goal was to produce equal classroom participation by students regardless of their national, cultural, or linguistic group. The teacher had observed that her Asian students were quiet during class discussions, and her immediate goal was to increase their comfort and participation levels. Lack of participation can also mean a lack of voice and power and a lack of social justice in the classroom. To determine the multiple causes of participation, the teacher started by having students fill out a questionnaire. Then the teacher interviewed students to learn their reasons and understand their perspectives. Her active intervention was to share these results and to put students in groups to discuss and make suggestions for change. From this activity, the teacher and her students constructed a new set of classroom policies. The teacher found initial positive results, but you can see that this study would naturally lead into another cycle of data collection to determine the effectiveness of the new policies. Action research tends to be cyclical or ongoing because as you reflect on your findings, you will usually want to plan another round of intervention and data collection.

Subtopic 3

Models

Feminist Action Research

■ **Feminist action research** Studies that provide a feminist lens to help eliminate various forms of sexism and empower women in society

- + Has many similarities with critical action research
- + The focus is on viewing the world through a **feminist** lens, eliminating binary (either/or) thinking, **raising consciousness** about women's issues, and **adding women's voices** to conversations that are typically controlled by white men
- + The goal is to **improve the lives of women in society**, including their psychological health, their cultural power, the prestige of their contributions to society, and their material wealth



Subtopic 3

Models

Action Science

■ **Action science** Science of practice, with the aim of making theories in use explicit and produce a learning organization

- + It was founded by Chris Argyris and Donald Schön
- + Its focus is on research in **organizations**
- + What makes AS different from other forms of action research (e.g., PAR, CAR) is that it places more emphasis on traditional scientific rigor and emphasizes that you **try to make your organization a learning organization** in which people work together and grow over time



Qualitative Research

Recap activities:

Comment on the question shown below about the topics
studied today

What are some problems that you could address by conducting an action
research study in your place of work?

Qualitative Research

References:

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